

## Message Text

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ACTION OES-06

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 NEA-10 INR-07 INRE-00 L-03 EB-07

/034 W

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O R 241214Z NOV 76

FM AMCONSUL BOMBAY

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6889

INFO AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 BOMBAY 2984

STADIS//////////

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: TECH ENGR

SUBJ: TARAPUR SPENT FUEL STORAGE FACILITIES

REF: A) STATE 285244; B) STATE 280448

1. SUMMARY. SETHNA IS PESSIMISTIC ABOUT EARLY PROGRESS IN RESOLVING PROBLEMS RELATING TO TARAPUR FUEL SUPPLY, BUT SAYS HE IS DETERMINED TO BE AS COOPERATIVE AS POSSIBLE DURING THIS PERIOD WHEN IT WILL BE HARD TO MAKE MUCH PROGRESS. HE EXPECTS TO PROVIDE EARLY CONFIRMATION (A) THAT SPENT FUEL STORAGE CAPACITY IS ADEQUATE FOR NEXT TWO TAPS REFUELINGS AND (B) OF ULTIMATE DATE FOR ARRIVAL FRESH HEXAFLORIDE TO PREVENT DISRUPTION IN FUEL FABRICATION PROCESS. HE ALSO PROMISED MOVE AHEAD PROMPTLY WITH DECLASSIFICATION OF LAST/KEIFER REPORT. SETHNA ALSO ASKED THAT USG GIVE EARLY FORMAL ASSURANCE TO IAEC, AS IS REQUIRED UNDER OUR BILATERAL, THAT USG WILL APPROVE OF STORAGE OF SPENT TAPS FUEL IN RECEIVING POOL OF PLUTONIUM SEPARATION PLANT AT TARAPUR, PROVIDED THAT TAPS FUEL IS UNDER IAEA SAFEGUARDS WHILE IN RECEIVING POOL. END SUMMARY.

2. A LONG DISCUSSION WITH IAEC CHAIRMAN SETHNA TODAY CENTERED ON URGENT QUESTIONS RAISED IN REFTTEL A RELATING TO POSSIBLE BUY-BACK OF SPENT FUEL, ISSUANCE OF AMENDED XSNM-845, AND SPENT FUEL STORAGE LIMITATIONS. ON SEVERAL OCCASIONS, HOWEVER, SETHNA  
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ADVERTED TO BROADER QUESTIONS AND REVEALED THAT HE REMAINS QUITE

PESSIMISTIC OVER PROSPECTS FOR INDO-US NUCLEAR COOPERATION WHICH HE SEES AS IMPACTING HEAVILY ON OVERALL STATE OF INDIAN-US RELATIONS. HE SAID THAT NEW SECRETARY OF STATE AND PARTICULARLY NEW US AMBASSADOR TO INDIA, WILL NEED ALL THEIR DIPLOMATIC SKILLS TO FIND A WAY OUT OF THE CURRENT IMPASSE. SETHNA SEEMED APPREHENSIVE OVER SOME OF PRESIDENT-ELECT CARTER'S CAMPAIGN PROPOSALS. AT BEST, SETHNA SEES DELAY ON US SIDE AND SKEPTICISM OVER OUR ULTIMATE INTENTIONS ON INDIAN SIDE. BOTH THESE FACTORS WILL MAKE IT DIFFICULT, IN HIS VIEW, TO CREATE THE KIND OF NEGOTIATING ATMOSPHERE THAT IS ESSENTIAL IN RESOLVING DIFFERENCES IN APPROACH TO NUCLEAR COOPERATION. HE CLAIMED THAT HE IS DETERMINED TO MAKE WHATEVER PROGRESS IS POSSIBLE IN THE NEXT FEW MONTHS. HE WANTS TO DEMONSTRATE HIS CONTINUING WILLINGNESS TO SHOW THAT INDIA IS COOPERATING FULLY IN THIS PROCESS. HE REMAINS CONVINCED THAT EXCHANGES OF HIGH LEVEL VISITS ARE MOST DESIRABLE. OTHERWISE HE FEARS THAT AT LEAST ON THE INDIAN SIDE THE TENDENCY TO QUIBBLE OVER WHAT ARE ESSENTIALLY MINOR QUESTIONS WILL TEND TO OVERSHADOW THE BASIC INTEREST OF THE TWO COUNTRIES IN RESOLVING THIS PROBLEM.

3. ON QUESTION REGARDING DATA ON STORAGE FACILITY AT THE PLUTONIUM SEPARATION PLANT (REFTEL B), SETHNA FIRST CLAIMED THAT HE HAD TRANSMITTED THESE DRAWINGS TO US SO THAT WE ALREADY HAVE THE INFORMATION WE ARE SEEKING. WHEN I ASKED FOR A TRANSMITTAL REFERENCE, HE SAID HE WOULD SIMPLY SEND US ANOTHER COPY. I POINTED OUT THAT WE NEEDED SPECIFIC INFORMATION ON MATERIAL ALREADY IN THE POOL THAT WOULD LIMIT THE STORAGE OF TAPS MATERIALS OR MIGHT AFFECT THE ENTRY OF CASKS TO REMOVE THE TAPS MATERIAL. HE SAID HE WOULD HAVE TO HAVE A LETTER REQUESTING SUCH INFORMATION IF HE WAS TO AVOID CRITICISM ABOUT MORE "FREE-WHEELING" NEGOTIATING TACTICS. IT BECAME CLEAR THAT HE WOULD HAVE DIFFICULTY IN GIVING US DATA ABOUT MATERIAL IN THE POOL OTHER THAN SPENT FUEL FROM TAPS. HE NOTED PARENTHETICALLY THAT HE WOULD HAVE TO REQUEST THE DELETION OF A SENTENCE (PAGE 1 OF PART II) FROM THE LAST-KIEFER REPORT BECAUSE IT REFERS TO FUEL THAT IS NOT DIRECTLY RELATED TO TARAPUR. THIS PARTICULAR SENTENCE READS, "THEY ARE PROBABLY FUEL RODS FROM CIRUS REACTOR." IT BECAME CLEAR THAT ANY INDICATION IN OUR REQUEST THAT MIGHT SUGGEST WE WERE PRYING INTO USES OF THE REPROCESSING PLANT FACILITIES WOULD CREATE DIFFICULTIES FOR SETHNA WITHIN HIS OWN GOVERNMENT. HE REMARKED

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THAT THIS SITUATION IS PARADOXICAL BECAUSE THERE IS NOTHING TO HIDE AT THE REPROCESSING PLANT WHICH IS NOW IDLE. HE DID NOT DIRECTLY ENLARGE ON THIS STATEMENT BUT I GATHERED THAT HE IS KEEPING THE PLANT IDLE SO AS TO AVOID COMPLICATING EFFORTS TO RESOLVE THE FUEL SUPPLY PROBLEM. WHETHER HIS STATEMENT WAS INTENDED TO INDICATE THAT THE REPROCESSING PLANT HAS NOT YET HAD A "HOT" RUN WAS ALSO NOT CLEAR.

4. IN ANY EVENT, DIRECT QUESTIONS ON THE REPROCESSING PLANT ARE OBVIOUSLY VERY SENSITIVE FOR HIM IN THE LIGHT OF INCREASED AMERICAN OPPOSITION TO THE USE OF SUCH PLANTS. AT SAME TIME HE RECOGNIZES THAT STORAGE POOLS AT THE REPROCESSING PLANT WILL HAVE TO BE USED FOR TAPS FUEL IF THE TARAPUR REACTORS ARE TO BE KEPT

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 BOMBAY 2984

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RUNNING WITHOUT REPROCESSING. CONSEQUENTLY, INFORMATION ON THE STORAGE POOLS WILL HAVE TO BE FREELY AVAILABLE TO US AND TO THE IAEA. SETHNA THOUGHT THAT THE BEST WAY TO HANDLE HIS NEED FOR A FORMAL REQUEST WAS TO PHRASE OUR QUESTIONS IN SUCH A WAY THAT HE COULD, IF NECESSARY, REPLY BY SIMPLY INSERTING A LINE IN THE DRAWINGS SHOWING THE AREA THAT WOULD BE RESERVED FOR RECEIVING AND POSSIBLY STORING NON-TAPS SPENT FUEL. TO MEET THIS SITUATION WE JOINTLY AGREED ON THE WORDING OF A LETTER THAT I WOULD SEND TO HIM THIS AFTERNOON (HE NEEDS THE LETTER URGENTLY IF HE IS TO HAVE ANY CHANCE TO GET THE REPLY OUT BY THE END OF THE WEEK). THIS LETTER READS AS FOLLOWS:  
SALUTATION OMITTED. QUOTE. TO ASSIST IN THE EXAMINATION OF THE FUEL HANDLING CAPABILITIES AT TARAPUR IN CONNECTION WITH THE STUDY OF A POSSIBLE "BUY-BACK" OF SPENT FUEL, THE DEPARMTNET OF STATE WOULD APPRECIATE COPIES OF DRAWINGS OF THE RECEIVING POOL AT THE REPROCESSING PLANT. IT WOULD BE MOST HELPFUL IF THESE DRAWINGS COULD SHOW THE SPACE AVAILABLE FOR TEMPORARY STORAGE OF SPENT FUEL FROM TAPS AS WELL AS THE POSITIONING OF OTHER FUEL NOW IN THE POOL OR SPACE NEEDED FOR SUCH OTHER FUEL EXPECTED TO ENTER THE POOL DURING THE TIME TAPS FUEL WOULD ALSO BE IN THE POOL.

PARAGRAPH. THE DEPARTMENT WOULD ALSO APPRECIATE RECEIVING AVAILABLE DRAWINGS AND DESCRIPTIONS OF THE CASK HANDLING FACILITIES INCLUDING CRANE CAPACITIES AT THE RECEIVING POOL. END QUOTE. COMPLIMENTARY CLOSING OMITTED.

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TM SETHNA ALSO SAID THAT IF THE RECEIVING POOL AT THE REPROCESSING PLANT IS TO BE USED FOR TAPS SPENT FUEL HE MUST FORMALLY REQUEST THE IAEA TO PUT SAFEGUARDS ON THE POOL. HIS GOVERNMENT IS UNWILLING TO MAKE THIS REQUEST UNTIL HE HAS USG APPROVAL (IN ACCORDANCE WITH BILATERAL) FOR STORING THE TARAPUR FUEL THERE. HE URGES THAT THE DEPARTMENT QUICKLY PROVIDE HIM A FORMAL ASSURANCE THAT WE ARE AGREEABLE TO STORAGE OF TAPS FUEL IN THE RECEIVING POOL OF THE REPROCESSING PLANT, PROVIDED THAT THE LATTER IS SAFEGUARDED. APPARENTLY THERE ARE OBJECTIONS WITHIN THE GOI TO REQUESTING IAEA SAFEGUARDS, WHICH WOULD NOT BE NEEDED FOR THE REPROCESSING PLANT POOL AT ANY TIME IN THE NEAR FUTURE FOR OTHER PURPOSES, UNTIL THE US HAS CERTIFIED ITS WILLINGNESS TO LODGE TAPS SPENT FUEL THERE.

6. IN THIS CONNECTION SETHNA LAUNCHED INTO A DISCUSSION OF THE URGENCY OF RESOLVING THE FUEL STORAGE PROBLEM FAIRLY QUICKLY. HE SAID THAT THE LAST/KIEFER TABLE ON PAGE 2 OF PART II OF THEIR REPORT IS BASICALLY ACCURATE IN CONCLUDING THAT THERE WILL BE ABOUT 163 SPACES FOR SPENT ASSEMBLIES ONCE ADDITIONAL RACKS ARE PUT INTO THE TAPS POOLS AND WHEN THE REPROCESSING PLANT RECEIVING POOL IS PRESSED INTO SERVICE. WITH LUCK THESE SPACES WOULD TAKE CARE OF THE TWO REFUELINGS SCHEDULED FOR 1977. SPACES WOULD HAVE TO BE FREED OR CREATED FOR THE APRIL 1978 REFUELING.

7. SETHNA SAID THAT IT HAS NOW BEEN DEFINITELY DECIDED TO SHUT DOWN UNIT ONE OF THE TAPS REACTORS FOR REFUELING IN JANUARY BECAUSE IT HAS MANY LEAKERS. HE FEARS THAT IT MAY REQUIRE AS MANY AS 100 NEW ASSEMBLIES. IN THAT CASE, HE WILL BE BADLY SQUEEZED FOR THE NEXT REFUELING OF UNIT 2 IN THE FALL OF 1977. HOWEVER, THERE ARE WAYS TO STRETCH RESOURCES AND HE THINKS THAT THEY CAN GET THROUGH THE NEXT TWO REFUELINGS WITH THE STORAGE FACILITIES ENVISAGED. HE PROMISED TO CHECK THIS ESTIMATE AND GIVE ME A DEFINITIVE REPLY IN THE NEXT FEW DAYS.

8. SETHNA PROPOSES TO DEAL WITH THE QUESTION OF SUFFICIENCY OF FRESH HEXAFLORIDE ON HAND TO LAST UNTIL MAY 1977 IN HIS COMMENTS ON OUR REQUEST FOR DECLASSIFICATION OF THE LAST/KIEFER REPORT. FIGURE I IN THAT REPORT INDICATES THAT NEW FUEL WOULD NOT HAVE TO ARRIVE UNTIL THE END OF MAY 1977. SETHNA WILL SEE IF THERE ARE ANY CHANGES IN HIS PEOPLE'S ESTIMATES AND WILL THEN ATTEMPT TO CONFIRM WHATEVER DATE NOW GIVES THE BEST ESTIMATE IN HIS COMMENT

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ON THE LAST/KIEFER REPORT. INFORMALLY, HE INDICATED THAT MAY 1977  
STILL LOOKS LIKE A GOOD DATE TO HIM.

9. REGARDING THE LAST/KIEFER REPORT, SETHNA SAID THAT DURING  
HIS LONG ABSENCE FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF ATOMIC ENERGY THIS FALL,  
HIS COLLEAGUES HAD PREPARED WHAT AMOUNTED TO A LONG REBUTTAL TO  
MANY OF THE POINTS DEALT WITH BY LAS AND KIEFER. HE CLAIMS THAT  
HE HAS NOW CONVINCED THEM THAT SUCH AN APPROACH WOULD NOT BE  
CONSTRUCTIVE AND HE INTENDS TO LIMIT THE IAEC'S REPLY ON  
DECLASSIFICATION TO CORRECTION OF FACTUAL ERRORS AND EXCISION OF  
OBITER DICTA THAT COULD BE TROUBLESOME TO THE GOI, EG, THE  
COMMENT ON CIRUS FUEL NOTED ABOVE AND THE LAST SECTION OF PART II  
OF THE REPORT ENTITLED "TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE FOR TARAPUR." FROM  
CONVERSATION WITH HIS COLLEAGUES I SUSPECT THAT THE IAEC COMMENTS  
ON DECLASSIFICATION WILL GO BEYOND THIS BUT STILL BE REASONABLE.  
COURTNEY

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## Message Attributes

**Automatic Decaptioning:** Z  
**Capture Date:** 01 JAN 1994  
**Channel Indicators:** n/a  
**Current Classification:** UNCLASSIFIED  
**Concepts:** NUCLEAR POWER PLANTS, TARAPUR, NUCLEAR FUELS  
**Control Number:** n/a  
**Copy:** SINGLE  
**Draft Date:** 24 NOV 1976  
**Decaption Date:** 28 MAY 2004  
**Decaption Note:** 25 YEAR REVIEW  
**Disposition Action:** RELEASED  
**Disposition Approved on Date:**  
**Disposition Authority:** KelleyW0  
**Disposition Case Number:** n/a  
**Disposition Comment:** 25 YEAR REVIEW  
**Disposition Date:** 28 MAY 2004  
**Disposition Event:**  
**Disposition History:** n/a  
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**Disposition Remarks:**  
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**Drafter:** n/a  
**Enclosure:** n/a  
**Executive Order:** GS  
**Errors:** N/A  
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**Original Handling Restrictions:** STADIS  
**Original Previous Classification:** n/a  
**Original Previous Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Page Count:** 5  
**Previous Channel Indicators:** n/a  
**Previous Classification:** CONFIDENTIAL  
**Previous Handling Restrictions:** STADIS  
**Reference:** 76 STATE 285244, 76 STATE 280448  
**Review Action:** RELEASED, APPROVED  
**Review Authority:** KelleyW0  
**Review Comment:** n/a  
**Review Content Flags:**  
**Review Date:** 13 AUG 2004  
**Review Event:**  
**Review Exemptions:** n/a  
**Review History:** WITHDRAWN <30 MAR 2004 by hartledg, REFER TO DOE>; RELEASED <13 AUG 2004 by ShawDG>; APPROVED <16 AUG 2004 by KelleyW0>  
**Review Markings:**

Margaret P. Grafeld  
Declassified/Released  
US Department of State  
EO Systematic Review  
04 MAY 2006

**Review Media Identifier:**  
**Review Referrals:** n/a  
**Review Release Date:** n/a  
**Review Release Event:** n/a  
**Review Transfer Date:**  
**Review Withdrawn Fields:** n/a  
**Secure:** OPEN  
**Status:** NATIVE  
**Subject:** TARAPUR SPENT FUEL STORAGE FACILITIES  
**TAGS:** TECH, ENRG, IN  
**To:** STATE  
**Type:** TE  
**Markings:** Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006